

Pain Relief as a Basic Human Right

Hob Osterlund, RN, MS, CHTP, Clinical Coordinator
Pain Management Services, The Queen's Medical Center

Pain and its relief can be viewed from a number of perspectives: clinical, personal, political. In some cases it becomes useful to recall that the etymological root of "pain" lies in "*poena*" or "punishment." Nowhere is the concept of punishment more overt than in torture and war, where human pain is used as a political expression of another individual or regime. Elaine Scarry in her book *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* analyzes the similarity between war, torture and the simple act of overlooking the pain of another human being.

In each of these situations, the central act is making a person (or thousands of people) invisible. This can be done by an overt choice to destroy or damage the human body; it also can be done by a simple refusal to recognize the voice and experience of the person in pain. In any case, the essential aliveness of the person is denied. As a result, they are "unmade" rather than created, erased rather than seen. The unmaking of their pain is also the

destruction of their world.

In fact, pain itself mimics death. Both happen because of the body or perhaps what is felt to be the betrayal of the body; in each, the contents of consciousness are totally altered. Each of us normally has a range of awareness that spans years, continents and countless memories. At any given moment one might be thinking about her most beautiful child, the billions of galaxies discovered by the Hubble telescope or simply what to pick up for dinner on the way home. In pain, conscious thought is diminished to this very moment in this very place. The body becomes the only object of focus, taking the place of all other experiences. No other reality is imagined or felt. Being free of the pain seems a task too impossible to wish for. The vague notion that all people die someday changes to "I'm dying" or "I hope to die." The expression "I thought I was going to die" when describing an event of severe pain is no coincidence.

Thus, pain shrinks the world of the one in pain. Intuitively,

for
Cost Effective
Alternatives
to Hospitalization

Call Hawaii's most
experienced provider
of home infusion therapies

PHARMACARE

WE MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER

SERVING ALL ISLANDS
JCAHO Accredited with Commendation

99-1260 Iwaena St., #100, Aiea, HI 96701
Main Office (808) 488-9446
Hilo Branch Office (808) 961-5115

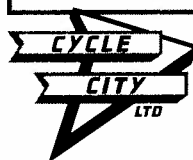
TAKE ONE A DAY AND CALL ME IN THE MORNING



Harley-Davidson FAT BOY®

We can put the wind in your hair and the freedom back into your spirit with Harley-Davidson, Kawasaki, Buell and Moto Guzzi motorcycles, parts, accessories and professional service. We speak the lingo to bikers and welcome new riders by walking you from school, to license, to the right bike.

FUEL THE PASSION



2965 N. Nimitz Highway
(Near JN Chevrolet and the Airport)
Open daily

Phone: 831-2600

most people will attempt to expand their shrunken world by sharing the experience of the pain so that the attention and understanding of others will lessen the intensity of the experience. Recognizing that pain has no voice other than pre-language sounds of agony others will find hard to believe, people in pain struggle to find a mutual language. All too quickly they discover *there is life in that language*. So they work to stay alive, dramatizing the language if unheard by more subtle talk. The voice itself becomes life-giving, resuscitating the mind from the deafening and deathening sounds it cannot ignore.

The distance between the one in pain and the one witnessing the pain is often far greater than the number of feet or miles separating them. The distance is more accurately measured by the distance between their physical realities. The one in pain is profoundly sure of the presence of that pain; the witness, suspicious. Denying the

possibility that one day she could feel such intense pain, the observer inadvertently denies the entire existence of the one in pain. Able to understand death only in the abstract, she may have little compassion for what appears to be an exaggerated response.

When the witness recognizes the legitimacy of another's pain, however, she also honors the person's entire existence. Aneta Catlin, doctoral candidate at Rush University, describes being a nurse in wartime Israel in 1972. Frequently caring for enemy soldiers injured in Israeli territory during terrorist action, the nurses knew the Geneva Convention required them to medically treat the enemy soldiers. According to the same Convention, she says, *they were not required to treat their pain*. This created a dilemma for some nurses. Trained in the art of caring and willing to recognize the suffering of a wartime enemy, these nurses had the opportunity to stretch the boundaries of what it is to be fully human.

Treatment of pain is a basic right, though not necessarily legally or clinically mandated. Recognition of the pain of another takes a set of skills more complex and inevitably more courageous than those of politics or medicine; it takes the awareness and acceptance of one's own mortality.

References

1. Scarry, E. (1985). *The Body in Pain: the making and unmaking of the world*. New York: Oxford University Press, 3-43.

THE SUPPORT

With 1,700 American Express Travel offices in 120 Countries around the world, we're there to help you almost anywhere you go. American Express Travel is your home away from home.

THE VALUE

The volume of business we generate for our travel partners provides us extensive price advantages that we pass on to you, our customer. Let us show you how you can save money on air, hotel, car, cruise and tour arrangements.

THE SERVICE & EXPERIENCE

Dedicated to providing local personalized service, your American Express Travel team is composed of seasoned travel professionals. With over 250 years of experience among them, you can rest assured your travel arrangements will receive the attention to detail they deserve.

TRAVEL FINANCIAL SERVICES

American Express is your "one stop shop" for all your travel financial service needs, including Travelers Cheques (7 major currencies), Foreign Exchange, Gift of Travel certificates, Gift Cheques, MoneyGram, etc.



AMERICAN EXPRESS CARDMEMBERS

We also provide American Express Cardmembers with services such as emergency check cashing, emergency card replacement and exclusive offers for Cardmembers.

You Make People Well. We Make Travel Easy.

For relief of travel headaches, take this ad and call us in the morning. Whether you're traveling for business or pleasure, nobody covers the world like American Express Travel.



Travel

COMMERCE TOWER

1440 Kapiolani Blvd. • Suite 104
(Corner of Kapiolani Blvd. and Keeaumoku Ave.)
947-7171 and 941-0568



**HAWAII
PATHOLOGISTS'
LABORATORY**

The Full Service Lab

*Offering Comprehensive
Services in..*

- Clinical Pathology
- Surgical Pathology
- Frozen Section Diagnosis
- Pap Smears
- Special Cytology
- Flow Cytometry
- Fine Needle Aspiration
- Bone Marrow Interpretation
- Specimen Photography
- Image Analysis

1301 Punchbowl Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
547-4271 Fax 547-4045